

House Republican Press Release

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Reps. Stone, Tymniak Give 2005 Session Mixed Reviews



*Disappointed that Transportation Package
Remains Unfinished*

Rep. Jack Stone, R-134, and Cathy C. Tymniak, R-133, said the 2005 legislative session achieved several accomplishments, but left major business unfinished. They noted that the number one priority for Fairfield County, replacing the aging, unreliable Metro-North commuter rail fleet, never came up for a final vote in the state House and Senate.

A \$1 billion transportation improvement package would upgrade Metro-North and remove several bottlenecks on I-95. It died, however, at midnight June 8 without a vote. It is expected to be approved at a special session tentatively scheduled for June 23.

“We can point to pluses and minuses, but overall it was disappointing because the major item for Fairfield County was not passed and is being held hostage. That is the transportation package,” said Rep. Stone. “One of the pluses is the passing of the cell phone bill which I have cosponsored for several years.”

Rep. Tymniak said, “The legislature had five months under the state Constitution to complete its work, but the majority leadership left too many issues for the final week that could not be completed on time.”

The 2005 session of the General Assembly offered pluses and minuses, Reps. Stone and Tymniak said.

On the plus side:

1. We have agreement on the new rail cars and improvements on Metro-North, but not a final vote. The new equipment is several years away, but at least it is in design stages.
2. We approved \$10 million for stem cell research. This is good for our economy and offers hope that in the future we may have exciting new treatments for people suffering from a variety of injuries and diseases.

3. We continued to make progress in making our environment better, passing the next generation of a clean cars legislation.
4. We passed a prohibition on the use hand-held cell phones while driving.
5. We adopted a requirement that electronic voting machines create a paper trail.
6. We enacted important protections against identity theft by giving consumers the opportunity to freeze their credit records unless they consent to a report.

On the minus side:

1. The legislature adopted a \$31-billion, two-year budget that increases spending 12 percent over two years and raises taxes. Among the new taxes are a death tax that begins with an estate of \$2 million and a 5.085 percent tax rate that goes back to the first dollar. It is retroactive to January 1, 2005. The budget also puts a 20 percent surcharge on business income taxes. Separately the legislative majority extended the tax on home sales to July 1, 2007, in spite of repeated promises that it was only temporary.
2. The House and Senate failed once again to provide relief from spiraling medical malpractice premiums.
3. The legislature failed to follow the lead of Governor Rell and adopt real campaign finance reform.
4. The legislative majority not only continued an unfair educational cost sharing formula, but also increased funding for the three big cities with little left over for smaller towns.

Representative Jack Stone serves the 134th District of Fairfield and Trumbull and Cathy C. Tymniak represents the 133rd District of Fairfield and Westport in the state House of Representatives.